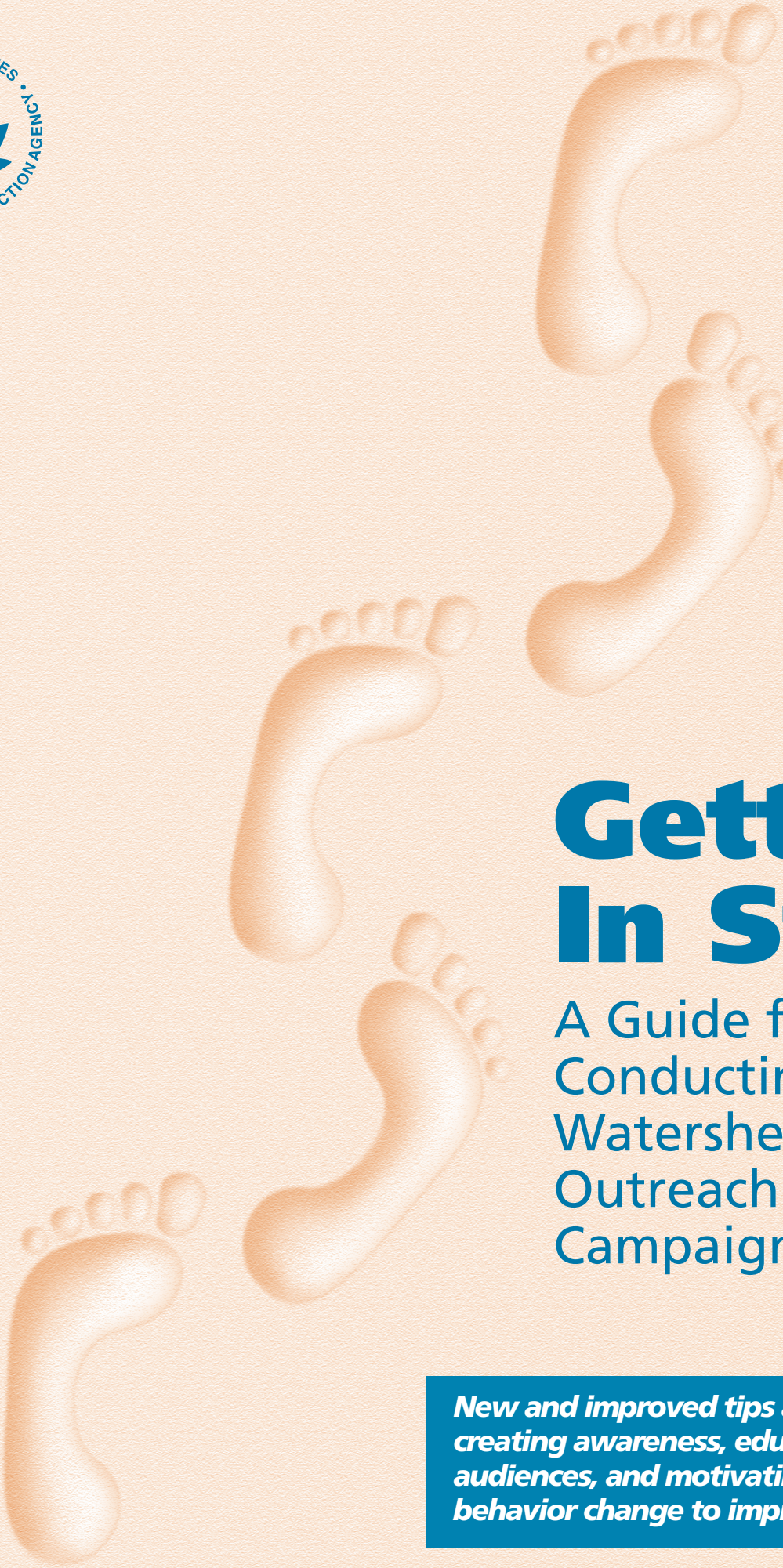

Getting In Step

A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns

New and improved tips and tools for creating awareness, educating specific audiences, and motivating positive behavior change to improve water quality

Getting In Step

A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns

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As a companion to this guide, EPA and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food jointly developed *Getting In Step: A Video Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns* (EPA 841-B-03-001). The 30-minute video includes four in-depth case studies that showcase successful outreach programs from around the country and highlight key tips from this guide.

For copies of this guide and the companion video, contact
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Phone: 1-800-490-9198
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Introduction

Purpose of this guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide the tools needed to develop and implement an effective outreach campaign as part of a state or local water quality improvement effort. Whether you're charged with developing a watershed management plan to restore impaired waters or protecting your local water resources for the future, this guide will help you understand the importance of reaching out to people and motivating them to act. It will help you understand the audiences in your watershed, create messages that resonate with them, find appropriate ways to communicate your message, and prompt changes in behavior to reduce water pollution.

This guide is an update of the 1998 publication *Getting In Step: A Guide to Effective Outreach in Your Watershed*. This updated version includes more specific information on how to work with the mass media to conduct an outreach campaign. It also provides new information on how to incorporate social marketing techniques into your campaign to generate sustainable behavior changes that will protect water quality. The guide will teach you how to listen to the needs of your audience rather than just blindly handing out fact sheets or reports that sit on shelves and collect dust. It will show you the important roles that audience research and program evaluation play in changing personal behavior. The step-by-step approach to social marketing and outreach planning and implementation in this guide will help you to determine the most effective vehicle to reach the target audience and motivate behavior change.

As a companion to the guide, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food have jointly developed a how-to video called *Getting In Step: A Video Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns.* This 35-minute video provides background on the six steps for conducting an environmental outreach campaign and includes four in-depth case studies that showcase successful local outreach programs from across the country. The video icon  in this guide highlights information from the video case studies.

In addition to the outreach guide and video, EPA recently published a new guide in the *Getting in Step* series on stakeholder involvement.

What's in the Introduction

- Purpose of this guide
- Why is outreach needed?
- What's being done?
- How can outreach help get the job done?
- How can outreach help change behavior?
- What's inside

Outreach and education can help create an awareness of the value of our water resources, educate people on what's threatening the resources, and encourage protective action.

Getting in Step: Engaging and Involving Stakeholders in Your Watershed was released in February 2003. The Stakeholder Guide features information on how to generate interest and participation in watershed assessment, planning, and management. Web-based versions of all these guides are available on EPA's Web site at www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/outreach/documents.

Why is outreach needed?

We've made a lot of progress cleaning up America's lakes, rivers, and streams since the passage of the 1972 Clean Water Act. We don't have fires on rivers anymore. Fish kills are down, and the quality of sewage treatment has improved dramatically. But even with all our laws and regulations, about 40 percent of the nation's waters are still too polluted for fishing, swimming, and other uses. Compounding the problem is a lack of public awareness. In a survey for the *Ninth Annual National Report Card on Environmental Attitudes, Knowledge, and Behaviors* (May 2001), the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation found that 45 percent of respondents believe that the most common cause of water pollution is still factories.

Some of the worst problems have been solved. The Clean Water Act has focused a powerful array of regulations and resources on improving wastewater discharges from cities, factories, and other facilities. Billions of dollars have been spent on new treatment plants, permitting systems, and inspections. But many of America's waters are still contaminated by sediment, sewage, disease-causing bacteria, fertilizers, manure, toxic metals, and oil and grease. Some of our stream corridors, riverbanks, and lakeshores lack stabilizing vegetation and continue to erode, further degrading water quality and aquatic habitat.

Today, polluted runoff is the source of most of the contamination in the nation's waters. Heavy rains and melting snow pick up pollutants and transport them downhill toward the nearest body of water or leach through the soil, carrying pollutants toward ground water supplies.

Runoff from an urban or suburban area, for example, is likely to contain the following:

- Fertilizer and pesticides leached from lawns
- Oil and antifreeze washed off driveways
- Bacteria and organic matter from pet waste
- Sediment from construction sites
- High storm flows and increased stormwater temperatures

Runoff from farms, homes, or factories in rural areas can contain many of the same pollutants. Multiplied by hundreds or thousands of acres in a watershed, the cumulative effect of polluted runoff can be devastating to the receiving waters downstream.

Point versus nonpoint

Point source pollution is defined as pollution that comes from factories and sewage treatment plants. It is usually discharged to waterbodies through pipes.

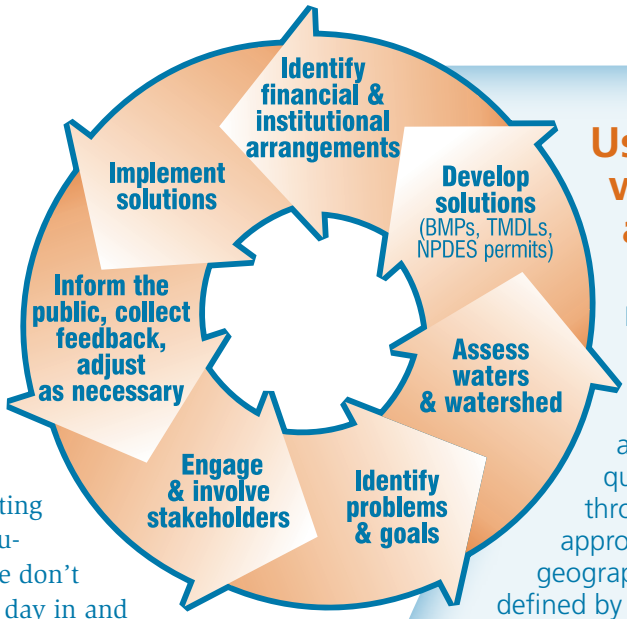
Nonpoint source pollution (also called polluted runoff) comes from many diffuse sources. It occurs when rainfall or snowmelt moves over and through the ground. As it moves, this runoff picks up pollutants like dirt, oil, and fertilizers and carries them to lakes, rivers, coastal waters, and even our underground sources of drinking water.

What's being done?

EPA and state and local governments are addressing these challenges by focusing on some of the remaining major sources of water pollution (e.g., urban streets and parking lots, livestock farms, septic tanks). They're implementing best management practices (BMPs) to reduce polluted runoff and launching new initiatives to educate people and motivate them to change their own personal behaviors to help in the effort. But the problems are so widespread that fighting polluted runoff requires the efforts of individuals and communities nationwide. Most people don't realize that many of the things they do every day in and around their homes contribute to polluted runoff. Those individual behaviors need to be changed. Making a change from pollution-generating behaviors to pollution-preventing behaviors will require education, enlightenment, and new attitudes. When people know, understand, and change how they do things, polluted runoff problems can be solved.

How can outreach help get the job done?

Many state and federal agencies require some form of outreach or public education and involvement as part of their water quality laws and regulations. For example, Phase II of EPA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater regulations, which calls for small municipal separate storm sewer system operators to develop and implement stormwater management programs, requires that localities provide opportunities for citizens to participate in the development of the program and that they distribute educational materials on stormwater runoff. Developing an effective outreach campaign not only will help gain the critical support and compliance that will lead to the ultimate success of the stormwater management program, but also will help meet the federal requirements EPA has set. If your program requires the cooperation of the public to meet its legal obligations, making the audience aware of the issues, educating them on what needs to be done, and motivating them to take action will help you meet both your regulatory and water quality objectives.



Using a watershed approach

Much of the current effort at the federal and state levels to clean up pollution and protect water quality is organized through a watershed approach focused on geographic boundaries defined by drainage basins instead of political or jurisdictional boundaries. This approach provides a flexible coordinating framework that focuses public and private efforts on targeted problems within specific drainage basins. The guiding principles of the approach are stakeholder partnerships, a geographic focus, and sound science. Thousands of projects over dozens of years have shown that involving the people affected by watershed management decisions in making those decisions generates high levels of long-term support and success. Even more important, however, is motivating changes in individual behaviors in the watershed to help achieve watershed results after watershed plans have been developed.

Constant feedback is necessary to determine whether the practices used actually help clean up or protect the lake, river, stream, wetland, or ground water source of concern. Throughout the process, there is a continuous need to inform, engage, and motivate water quality managers, "sideline" stakeholders, cooperating agencies, elected officials, so-called "bad actors," and the public. Outreach campaigns can be powerful tools in this process.

How can outreach help change behavior?

Changing behavior through education and developing responsible attitudes among watershed citizens and communities is not a simple task, but experience has demonstrated that it can be done. Think of times when you've changed your own attitude or behavior, perhaps when you finally realized that it really isn't so hard to separate the recyclables from the trash or decided to get serious about a diet or exercise program. A few things happened before the behavior change took place. First, you received information on the ramifications of your current behavior—specific data on the problem. Then you linked your actions to something you cared about—your health or your pocketbook, for instance. Finally, you decided to do something about it. Maybe you haven't achieved the success you ultimately want, but you're trying and you're better off now than you were.

That's the approach needed to address polluted runoff. Although it's important to let people know about the water quality problems the professionals have found, sometimes simply informing and educating people on the issues is not enough to initiate behavior change. The most effective way to get people to change their behavior is through social marketing.

Social marketing means looking at the target audience as consumers. Instead of selling products or services, social marketing sells ideas, attitudes, and behaviors. The goal of social marketing is not to make money, but to improve our society and the environment. Social marketing might be most familiar to you in terms of preventing drunk driving or forest fires. Everyone knows the popular slogans—"Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk" and "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires." These social marketing campaigns persuade the public that a problem exists that only they can solve. The campaigns benefit the public at large and the environment.

Social marketing involves identifying and removing the barriers that have prevented the consumer from "buying" the recommended behavior. For example, if you're trying to get people to test their soil before they apply lawn fertilizer, you can make it easier for them: sponsor a soil test day on which a local garden supply store hands out free soil test kits and demonstrates their use. This approach will go a lot further toward getting people to test their soil than merely sending out a flyer in the mail. The key to effective social marketing is talking and listening to the people you're trying to reach.

What's inside

Getting In Step provides the overall framework for developing and implementing your outreach campaign in concert with an overall water quality improvement effort. It presents the outreach process as discrete steps, with each step building on the previous ones. The steps are as follows:

- Define the driving forces, goals, and objectives
- Identify and analyze the target audience
- Create the message
- Package the message
- Distribute the message
- Evaluate the outreach campaign

Appendices A–D include worksheets to help you develop your outreach plan. They may be photocopied and used as templates for preparing your plan. Appendix E provides information on additional resources for outreach and education. It includes publications, Web sites, phone numbers, and other available outreach materials.

Throughout the guide, sidebars provide specific examples, key concepts, and recommended resources for obtaining more information.

So let's get started on developing an effective watershed outreach campaign...

The key to successful outreach is targeting your message to a specific audience and having them respond to your message.

Part 1: Developing a Watershed Outreach Campaign Plan

To develop an effective outreach campaign, you need a plan. Just as you would never drive through unfamiliar territory without a map, you should not conduct an outreach campaign without a plan. The planning process presented in this section follows well-defined steps, and it's important to identify the elements and information needed to complete each step before proceeding to the next one. Each step is more or less defined by the previous one, so it's vital to go through the steps sequentially and completely before moving on. Too often, someone starts in the middle of the process, and important steps—identifying measurable objectives or defining target audiences, for example—are ignored. Such an unfocused approach is often ineffective and wasteful.

Step 1: Define the driving forces, goals, and objectives

Once you've decided to take on an outreach campaign, you'll need to identify its driving forces. You'll also need to set goals and objectives to guide the process of engaging and informing those who are contributing to water quality degradation and motivating them to adopt more appropriate behaviors.

Driving forces

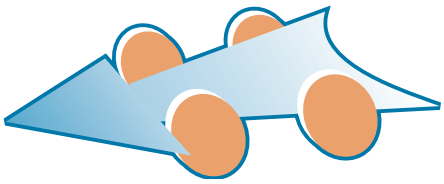
Identifying the forces that are driving the need for an outreach campaign will help determine the scope of the campaign and focus it on exactly what will get the job done. The driving force for a campaign often centers around a specific issue, such as a violation of state or federal water quality standards, the need to upgrade an NPDES permit to expand wastewater treatment capacity, or unmanaged development that has led to increased flooding and water quality problems.

What's in Part 1

- Step 1: Define the driving forces, goals, and objectives
- Step 2: Identify and analyze the target audience
- Step 3: Create the message
- Step 4: Package the message
- Step 5: Distribute the message
- Step 6: Evaluate the outreach campaign
- Where do I go from here?

What's in Step 1

- Driving forces
- Goals
- Objectives
- Setting up the evaluation process



For example, the City of San Diego faced two powerful driving forces when addressing stormwater pollution—one political and one regulatory. The city initiated "Think Blue" (www.thinkbluesd.com), a stormwater education and pollution prevention campaign, in response to a city council vote to reduce beach postings and closures by 50 percent based on public pressure. In addition, the city's stormwater permit specifically required documentation of behavior change and an increase in stormwater awareness among city residents.

Check out the Getting In Step video.

Building Blocks:
Driving Forces, Goals, and Objectives

Herndon County (a hypothetical locality) is suffering the effects of rapid development. The county's population has increased by 107 percent over the past 20 years. Many watersheds in the county are facing serious water quality problems, including phosphorus and nitrogen overloading caused by urban runoff, sedimentation and erosion, bacterial contamination, and flooding due to impervious surfaces.

To overcome many of these problems, Herndon County developed a watershed management plan to provide a planning framework for the county to make the most supportable, cost-efficient decisions on management practices that will restore and protect water quality. The county's overall goals for the plan are the following:

- Maintain the environmental goals set for the county's streams and lakes by the state
- Reduce nutrient runoff from residential and commercial areas
- Reduce the potential for flooding as development occurs
- Increase awareness about water quality problems and solutions to protect water quality
- Strengthen the linkage between land use activities and water quality and flooding
- Satisfy the requirements of the NPDES Storm Water Phase II regulations

The overall goal of the county's public outreach program is to "increase the involvement of the community in watershed protection activities through awareness, education, and action." The public outreach program will directly support the watershed management goals.

The following are some of the objectives that county staff identified to help achieve the outreach program's goal:

- Research the level of awareness in the county through focus groups and a phone survey in the spring
- Make residents aware that they live in a watershed and that their day-to-day activities affect water quality
- Increase awareness of residential nutrient runoff by 25 percent within 1 year and encourage behaviors that will reduce nutrient pollution in local streams and lakes
- Through a 6-month media campaign, educate residents and businesses about the link between land use activities and water quality/flooding, as well as about the county's role in protecting water resources and managing stormwater

Development pressure was the driving force in west Michigan, where protection of the Bear Creek watershed meant gaining public buy-in for the development of stricter ordinances outlining where homes could be built. The Bear Creek Watershed Project organizers launched a hefty outreach campaign to spread their message.
Check out the Getting In Step video.

Development of a Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL (the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards), can also generate the need for an outreach campaign (see box). Once a TMDL is calculated for a waterbody, stakeholders in the watershed should be educated on what they can do individually to help meet the objectives of the TMDL. Such stakeholder involvement is a very important part of the process. To find out how to effectively engage stakeholders in water quality protection, read the companion guide, *Getting In Step: Engaging and Involving Stakeholders In Your Watershed*. The stakeholder guide is available on EPA's Web site at www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/outreach/documents.

Goals

Keeping the driving forces you identified in mind, you can now develop goals and objectives for your campaign. Goals are general statements that express the broad focus of your effort.

Make sure that your goals link back to the driving forces. For example, in response to declining fisheries, the goal of your watershed project might be to protect and restore a local trout fishery. You've decided that outreach is needed to increase public awareness about the importance of the trout fishery to the community and increase community involvement in protecting and restoring the fishery. Later on, you'll develop and implement a wide range of specific measurable objectives to support those goals.

In some cases, there might not be an overarching water quality improvement effort driving your campaign. For example, if your community's trout fishery is not yet in trouble but you would like to preserve and protect its pristine nature and ensure its quality for future generations, the goal of your outreach campaign might be simply to generate awareness of the importance of the fishery and the need to protect it. No problem is necessary before a campaign can begin. Prevention is the best medicine. Remember that awareness is the first step toward behavior change.

Objectives

The objectives developed to achieve a goal should be specific, measurable, action-oriented, relevant, and time-focused (SMART). You'll probably develop several objectives for each goal you're trying

TMDLs as a driving force

A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards, and an allocation of that amount to the pollutant's sources.

For the past 10 years, TMDLs have increasingly become the driving force behind major water quality improvement projects across the country. In 1998 states reported more than 41,800 impairments affecting some 20,000 waterbodies. An estimated 36,000 TMDLs for these waters might need to be completed in the next 8 to 13 years. Many states are subject to even shorter, court-ordered schedules for their TMDLs.

Is it a mission, a vision, or a goal?

Many people get hung up on the terminology when setting their goals. The important thing to remember is that it is a hierarchy: you move from the broad (goals or mission statements) to the specific (objectives and tasks). Each subsequent level should answer the question "How?" from the previous level. For example, if your goal is to restore the trout fishery, the next level down should answer "How would you restore the fishery?"

to achieve. Keep the desired outcome in mind when forming your objectives. Do you want to create awareness, provide information, or encourage action among the target audience? It's very important to make your objectives as specific as possible and to include a time element as well as a result. This approach will make it easier to identify specific tasks and will enable you to evaluate whether you've achieved the objective. For example, an objective for the goal of increasing community involvement in the protection and restoration of the trout fishery might be to start a citizen volunteer monitoring program by next year.

It's important to remember that as you progress through the phases of developing and implementing an outreach campaign, your outreach objectives and activities will change. As the target audience becomes aware of the issues, you'll focus your efforts toward action. For example, during the early stages of the planning process, it might be necessary to generate basic awareness of watershed issues and define polluted runoff; but as problems are identified, your objectives will focus on educating the target audiences on the causes of the problems and the potential solutions. Finally, your objectives will change to motivating action by the target audience to reduce adverse water quality impacts. Listed below are some general watershed project goals, with examples of the types of outreach objectives that should be considered for each goal:

Goal: Create a grassroots watershed association.
Objective: Within 6 months, identify five organizations willing to become project partners by signing a Memorandum of Agreement.

Goal: Develop a shared community vision or goal for the water resource.
Objectives: Hold two meetings in July to solicit comments from stakeholders and the public on what they envision for the watershed in the future; communicate elements of the agreed-upon goal or vision at both monthly watershed association meetings and town council meetings.

Goal: Conduct a baseline assessment of watershed conditions.
Objectives: Through local media outlets, notify organizations and the public the first week of March that baseline studies are under way; encourage those with information on abandoned dump sites or other possible contaminant sources to contact the planning team by the end of May to ensure that the information is included in the assessment.

Goal: Identify and prioritize stressors or problems preventing attainment of the vision.
Objective: Educate the target audience about how the identified stressors affect water quality, the types of management practices that might be needed, and how the prioritization process works through presentations and exhibits at three currently scheduled community events (county fair, Stream Cleanup Day, and Lions Club Antique Festival).

During a 2001 focus group study, EPA found that although some people have heard the term *watershed*, few people understand it well enough to be able to define it and, more importantly, few people see the importance of understanding what a watershed is in addressing the problem of nonpoint source pollution. Linking the problem to the causes is often the most important stage of education.

Goal: Evaluate watershed management program success, and adjust approach if necessary.
Objectives: Recruit volunteer monitors to gather long-range information on water quality trends; conduct five volunteer monitoring training courses over the next 2 years.

Once your objectives are defined, you'll need to prioritize them. You should evaluate which objectives are most important to help meet your overall goal. The priority goals and objectives you focus on might change from year to year because of political, economic, or climatic influences.

Use the Building Blocks worksheets in Appendix A to help you define the driving forces, goals, and objectives for your campaign.

Setting up the evaluation process

Although Step 6 of this guide provides more in-depth coverage of how to evaluate your outreach campaign, building in evaluation from the beginning and during every step will ensure that you stay on the right track and meet your program objectives. Ideally, feedback generated after each completed step will help you carry out the tasks for each subsequent step more effectively. This guide includes specific evaluation questions after each step to help you along the way. Keep in mind, however, that what is successful in one region of the country might not work in another region, state, or even county. By the same token, failure of a particular method of outreach for one issue or in one area does not necessarily mean that it won't work for your campaign. In the next step you'll learn how researching your target audience will help you determine what might work best for your situation.

PROCESS CHECKLIST

Step 1: Define your driving forces, goals, and objectives

- ❑ Are the objectives consistent with the planning team's goals?
- ❑ Are the objectives specific, with time limits and measurable components?
- ❑ Will the objectives be accepted and understood by the people that will be affected by them?
- ❑ Will I be able to evaluate whether the objectives were accomplished?
- ❑ Do I have the resources to accomplish the identified objectives?

"We conduct an annual phone survey that reaches about 450 households to determine changes in behavior and increased awareness of watershed issues. We use the information to help shape our media campaign for the next year, deciding where to put our resources and what issues we need to focus on."

—Deborah Castillo, City of San Diego Storm Water Program
www.thinkbluesd.com

Check out the Getting In Step video.